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Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of 47 members of the Human Rights Council

Note verbale dated 4 April 2006 from the Permanent Mission of Uruguay to the United Nations addressed to the Secretariat

The Permanent Mission of Uruguay to the United Nations presents its compliments to the United Nations Secretariat and has the honour to inform it that the Government of Uruguay has decided to put forward its candidacy for membership in the Human Rights Council at the election to be held during the sixtieth session of the General Assembly on 9 May 2006.

Uruguay, as a founding member of the United Nations, wishes to reaffirm its satisfaction at the establishment of the new Human Rights Council, which is the embodiment of efforts to strengthen the United Nations system for promoting, respecting and protecting human rights.

The effective exercise of human rights and their enjoyment by the entire population is a central concern and a priority issue for the Uruguayan Government. The practical task of protecting human rights is primarily a national matter and is mainly the responsibility of the State. Nonetheless, it is essential that the State also enjoy the support of civil society, including non-governmental organizations, in order to promote, protect and guarantee the full and effective exercise of human rights.

In the case of Uruguay, the essential elements for upholding the highest standards in promoting, respecting and protecting human rights have not only been enshrined in the National Constitution, but have also been regulated by law since 1825.

Uruguay has respected the human rights of its inhabitants throughout its history, with the sole exception of a period of military dictatorship between 1973 and 1985. As soon as democracy was re-established, its traditional respect for the human rights of all inhabitants was restored.

In the Government's view, the full realization of human rights cannot be achieved simply by adopting laws to protect them, and then mechanisms to ensure compliance with those laws. In order for such protection to be effective, people

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must be aware of their rights and of the mechanisms put in place to ensure that those rights are respected.

The delegation of Uruguay, which, like many other delegations, played a very active role in the negotiating process that culminated in the establishment of the Human Rights Council, supported the inclusion of "voluntary pledges and commitments" by candidates for membership in the Council, on the understanding that they represented a means of fostering compromise.

In keeping with an initiative of such importance, the Government of Uruguay wishes to make the following voluntary pledges and contributions to protect and promote human rights.

- Uruguay will ratify and accede to those international instruments which it has not yet ratified or to which it has not yet acceded.
- Uruguay will collaborate fully in the elaboration of any draft instruments that have not yet been concluded.
- Cooperation with the Human Rights Council. As part of the responsibilities to be assumed upon becoming a member of this new body, Uruguay pledges to cooperate fully with the Human Rights Council, with the aim of ensuring that human rights questions assume their rightful place in the United Nations system.
- In this context, Uruguay will promote a spirit of cooperation and genuine dialogue with a view to ensuring that the Council's work focuses on cooperation, prevention and guaranteeing the protection of all individuals against human rights violations, at any time and under any circumstances, and in every region.
- Uruguay will gladly submit to the universal periodic review mechanism and help to develop its modalities.
- Substantive interaction with special procedures and mechanisms. As a country that has extended a standing invitation to the special thematic procedures of the Commission on Human Rights to visit the country, Uruguay pledges to collaborate fully with those procedures and to ensure that it remains open to international scrutiny.
- Uruguay will also promote the serious and responsible review and, where necessary, the improvement and rationalization of all mandates, mechanisms, functions and responsibilities of the Commission on Human Rights in order to maintain a system of special procedures, expert advice and a complaint procedure.
- In this context, it will collaborate to ensure that all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development, are treated on the same footing, on the understanding that human rights cannot be attained without ensuring sustainable human development based on equity and social justice.
- Uruguay will also promote the principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity, as pillars of the Council's work.

- Relationship with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Uruguay will continue to cooperate closely with OHCHR in its fulfilment of its mandate, with the aim of assisting it to address the wide range of human rights problems facing the international community, especially in the areas of technical assistance and capacity-building.

- Recognizing the fundamental role played by civil society, including non-governmental organizations, in the human rights system, Uruguay pledges to ensure its effective participation in the Council, in accordance with practices observed by the Commission on Human Rights and with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

- Uruguay will work to ensure that the Council promotes the formulation and development of new multilateral laws in the field of human rights.

In accordance with the above, the Permanent Mission of Uruguay to the United Nations would be grateful if the Secretariat would register Uruguay as a candidate for membership in the Human Rights Council during the election to be held on 9 May 2006.